

# Mother Nature's power blasts man's power in costly storm

By TOM WALTON  
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Officials say lightning was the cause of a spectacular fire at Utah Power and Light's Hale Plant at the mouth of Provo Canyon Thursday night. Preliminary estimates are the plant sustained more than \$500,000 damage.

According to Orem Department of Public Safety spokesman Gerald Nielsen, lightning struck a 138,000-volt relay line at the plant, 5600 N. University, ultimately igniting some mineral oil at a transformer.

Firefighters from both Orem and Provo responded to the 6:40 p.m. blaze.

Daily Herald Sports Editor Dick Harmon witnessed the lightning strike from about a

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quarter-mile away as he was traveling to the BYU-Wyoming basketball game.

"Lightning was coming down all over the place in about 15-second intervals," Harmon said. "All of a sudden there was a big flash that appeared as if it hit between the mountain and Cascade Golf Course."

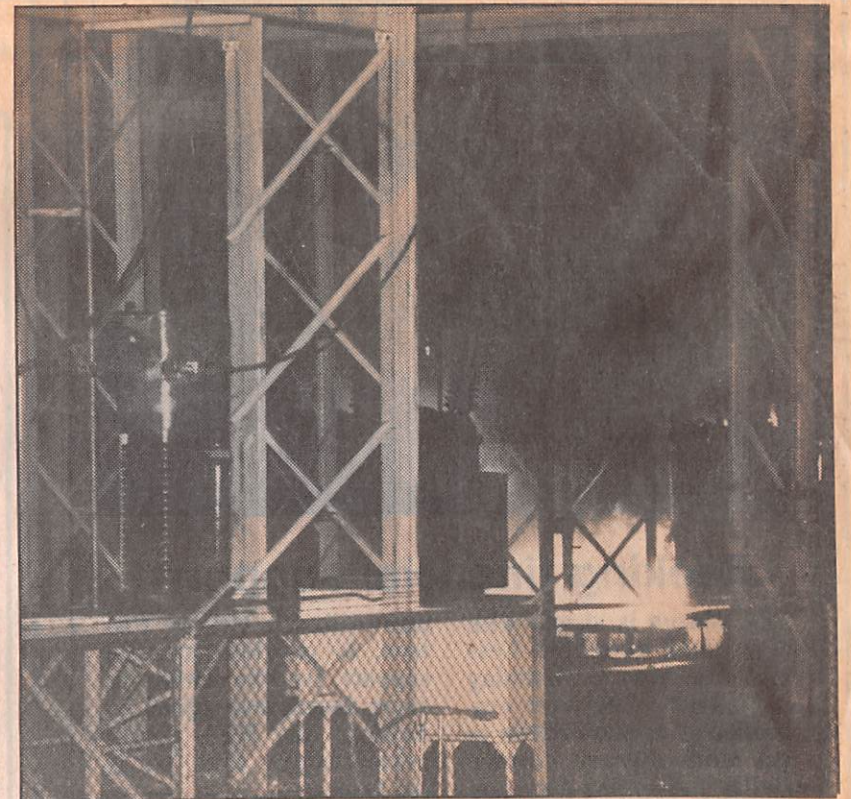
"Then there was a white flash. It went out. Two seconds later there was a huge explosion and a 75-foot wide fireball went shooting up into the sky. It closed off the whole area,

causing drivers of about a dozen cars in my vicinity to slam on their brakes.

"In about three seconds the fireball sucked down and disappeared, but you could tell a fire was raging at the plant," Harmon said.

The fire caused pockets of power outages from Point of the Mountain to Fairview, according to UP&L spokesman Dave Eskelsen. Traffic light outages were also reported in Provo. He said power was brought in from other areas and by about 10 p.m. everyone was back on line again.

After the spectacular fireball, travelers along University Avenue could see flames from the oil fire shooting 15-30 feet in the sky.



Lane Critser Photo

Fire at this substation blacked out much of the valley.